

MINUTES
INDIANA-KENTUCKY SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING
IK Synod Office – Indianapolis
Friday, September 15, 2023: Meeting – 7:00 – 9:30pm EDT/6:00 – 8:30 CDT
Saturday, September 16, 2023: Meeting – 9:30a.m. – 3:00 p.m. EDT/8:30a.m. – 2:00 p.m. CDT

Present:

Bishop Bill Gafkjen; Ted Miller, Vice President; Julie Slavens, Secretary; Josh Tatum, Synod Counsel

Rostered Members: Vicki Garber; Ryan Bailey; Joshua Penumaka; Evangelene Anderson Rajkumar; Tim Graham; Jane Rothman; Jody Winter; Ladona Webb

Lay Members: Dee Ann Daniels; Debbie Zehr; Ella Engelau (Youth Representative); Mike Hoover; Betsy Kirk; Chris Walda

Non-Voting Members and Staff: Tina Smith (Women of the ELCA representative); Cory Driver; Nancy Nyland; Dan Forehand; Susie Swenson; Karl Biermann (Saturday)

Friday, September 15

The Synod Council Meeting began with gathering devotions and prayer led by the Dan Forehand. The devotion theme was about darkness based upon Isaiah 45 about the treasures of darkness – being in darkness can bring on newness of relationship with God and life.

After devotions introductions of members present were made and Bishop Bill asked everyone to share some information about themselves and share where they have seen God at work in their lives.

Bishop Bill shared his discernment process for his decision to retire. He took several months to pray, listen to family and bishops, and mediate on Isaiah 43:19 while considering his initial decision before making the public announcement. He shared he felt like Moses in that he was able to lead the Synod through the wilderness, saw the promised land, but will not lead the Synod into that land. He has no plans after retirement but to wait, watch, and listen for God's plan for his next phase of life.

Members of the Council shared their appreciation for Bishop Bill's ministry as Bishop and as a member of the Synod staff.

Secretary's Report – Julie Slavens

Minutes of past meeting of May 31 were presented:

SC 2023/25: Minutes of the May 31st Synod Council meeting were approved unanimously. Dee Ann Daniels made the motion to approve the minutes as presented and Jody Winter seconded.

Executive Committee report – the committee approved the recommendation of the Bishop to petition the Conference of Bishops for a waiver of the three-year first call in a congregation provision for Amy Bartleson Balcam to be Chaplain at IU Children's Hospital in Indianapolis. She will also be a supply pastor of the Synod. The Synod Council must ratify the action of the Executive Committee. Bishop Bill provided information on this process and more details of Amy's call.

SC 2023/26: The Synod Council approved the motion unanimously to ratify the actions of the Executive Committee to petition the Conference of Bishops for an exception to the First Call provision for Amy Bartleson Balcam to be called as Chaplain at IU Children’s Hospital in Indianapolis. Tim Graham made the motion and Vicki Garber seconded.

Vice President’s Report – Ted Miller

Ted Miller reported there is a new member of the Synod Council representing the South Central Conference and has been nominated to the Council by the Dean of the conference. The new member is Dianna Hunsinger. The Synod Council must approve the nomination.

SC 2023/27: The Synod Council unanimously approved the motion to accept Dianna Hunsinger as the South Central Conference representative to the Synod Council. Vicki Garber made the motion and Ryan Bailey seconded the motion.

Ted Miller referred to his previously distributed written report and reported orally that the Synod is waiting to hear from Churchwide on the number of Delegates the Synod will have at the Churchwide Assembly in 2025. He also welcomed the new members to the Synod Council. He also reported on vacancies on the Council and will reach to the Deans of the conferences for nominees for the vacancies.

Ted shared the draft form of the survey to go out to congregations on gifts of the next bishops. The form will be sent out by the end of September. The results will be tabulated in January and reported on at that time.

SC 2023/28: The Synod Council unanimously approved the form as amended and to be sent out to the mission centers of the Synod by the end of September. Ladona Webb made the motion to approve the form as amended and Tim Graham seconded the motion.

Ted Miller reported briefly on his role in the Bishop election leading up to the Synod Assembly. He will begin by appointing a Bishop Election Task Force made up of former members of Synod Council.

The meeting adjourned for the evening at approximately 9 pm. Susie Swenson closed the meeting with prayer.

Saturday, September 16, 2023

The Synod Council meeting began at approximately 10:30 am.

Treasurer’s Report – Chris Walda

Chris Walda reported the 2021-2022 Audit was completed and the Synod passed the Audit. He then went over the previously distributed financial reports including the Balance sheet and Restricted Accounts.

Discussion and decisions related to 2024 Synod Assembly

Bishop Bill reported the Synod has contracted with an event planner to help with the 2024 Synod Assembly. Her name is Stephanie Dillion. She will be the lead person in planning the event.

The theme of the Assembly will be Waiting Watching and Working Together In Christ. This was the suggestion of the Synod staff. The keynote speakers will be the other bishops of Region 6. They will also do a video on the Role of the Bishop leading up to the Assembly. There will also be devotions relating to the theme leading up to the Assembly and these will be shared with members of the Synod. Ted and Bill will work on the agenda for the Assembly.

Discussion took place about whether the congregations know about the duties of the Bishop and it was mentioned maybe Section 8.12 of the Constitution could be included with the survey. This section sets out the duties of the Bishop. This would allow the congregations to be better informed about the duties of the Bishop so people would be better informed as to the gifts needed. Ted agreed to include this information with the survey.

Bishop Bill and Ted provided information and a written form of the tasks, details, and relationships involved in planning and implementation of the Assembly including staff responsibilities and volunteer needs. In addition, information was shared about the Bishop Election process and related needs and tasks on the part of Council members.

2025 Synod Assembly – In-Person or Virtual

There was a discussion about whether the 2025 Synod Assembly should be an in-person event or virtually. Over the past couple of years, the Assembly has been alternatively virtual and in-person. 2025 would be virtual but the question was if that is the way to go given it will be the new Bishop's first Assembly. Council members expressed the concern that it was important for the new Bishop to meet members of the Synod in person and vice versa during the first year of being in office. The Assembly offered a great opportunity to do so. Members did acknowledge there would be a greater financial cost to doing so but this could be planned for in the next budget.

SC 2023/29: The Synod Council approved unanimously to have the 2025 Synod Assembly in person. Vicki Garber made the motion and Ladona Webb seconded the motion.

Cancellation of regional events and possible alternate events in the spring

Bishop Bill reported on the reason for the cancellation to the fall regional events. With the departure of Dan Fugate in August, the committee was not able to continue the tasks of what needed to be done to appropriately have the meetings given the timing of Dan's departure and what tasks were yet needed such as providing for meals, registration procedures, and related matters. Many people were disappointed these events had to be cancelled. The committee has worked diligently in preparing the program for these events.

Bishop Bill discussed the idea of connecting these events to Chrism Liturgies conducted in the Spring. Those services can be adjusted to include lay members but would have to take place on a Sunday afternoon in order to allow lay persons to attend. It could be a joint service to incorporate the work of the committee in planning the fall events. Member of the Council provided various ideas for how this could work and it would be an opportunity for lay members to be with Bishop Bill before his retirement especially for those who would not be at the Assembly. Bishop Bill made it clear this is not to be about him and a farewell tour for him.

Bishop's Report – Bishop Bill

Bishop Bill relayed staffing and other concerns related to Bishop's election. Generally, the staff is appointed by the new Bishop but there is often a lay over period as well. Current Synod staff members are discerning what they are being called to do in the next year.

There is also the matter of an orientation plan for the Bishop-Elect. Generally, a Transition Team is formed and that will happen in the next few months. Other issues to consider in this process are:

1. Other expenses related to transition
2. Overlap of bishop-elect with outgoing bishop
3. Moving expenses
4. Installation service (Saturday, October 12, 2024, -- no location has been selected yet.)
5. Possible transition support (severance) for synod staff (This has been discussed with the Executive Committee.)

With respect to funding some of these expenses it was noted that last September, Council designated the Poellman estate gift for "New Synod for a New Day, Part 2", which included \$20,000.00 for a Consultant and \$12,962.41 for transition expenses of the program. These funds have not been used for this program and the Council was asked to consider redesignating these funds for the bishop transition expenses. After some discussion, Bishop Bill made the recommendation to do so. The Council unanimously agreed to redesignate these funds toward the expenses of the Bishop transition discussed previously.

Reimagining conferences in relation to bishop transition

The issue of conferences and their functions within the Synod have been a concern for a number of years. Some conferences are very functional and some are not. Bishop Bill relayed this is a good time to visit the function of the conferences given the timing of electing a new bishop. Bishop Bill reported he will begin this discussion with the Deans at their retreat at the end of October. This will be an agenda item for the Synod Council meeting in November.

Lutheran Disaster Response Grant to call/hire a Synod Disaster Coordinator and Capacity Builder

Bishop Bill explained purpose of the grant. It is to provide a person on staff to coordinate disaster relief in the Synod. Both states have had tornados and floods in the past few years. The position would be responsible for the Synod's response to such disasters. The grant is for \$195,000 over three years. The position may be a full time or part time position. The grant will not cover all of the costs for the position so the Synod will budget approximately \$20,000/year to supplement the cost.

Executive Session – The Council met in executive session for approximately 20 minutes.

The council received an update on the Synod's ongoing participation in legal action regarding USCIS by Josh Tatum. Other synods and entities are involved in the lawsuit. In order to continue participation in the suit and to be part of the appeal, each party is asked to provide \$5000.00. It is recommended the Synod continue in the lawsuit with the money to come from the designated and available candidacy funds.

SC 2023/30: The Council voted unanimously to pay its share of \$5000 to continue in the lawsuit with the funds coming from the designated and available candidacy funds. Jody Winter made the motion and Jacob Penumaka seconded the motion.

Congregational Concerns

Bishop Bill reported on the following congregation status for the information of the Council:

- Pleasant View, Indianapolis – voted to sell building, in discernment about next steps
- Zion, Bristol IN – vote to disaffiliate failed to achieve 2/3
- Third in Louisville has moved to a local store front and will provide a Dinner Church and Art Gallery in the new location
- Grace and Glory has moved along with its food pantry
- Gethsemane has quit worshipping as a congregation

Roster Concerns

Bishop Bill reported on the following Deacons and Pastors who have retired and recommended the Council approve their retirements.

- Deacon Hope Moran – 11/1/23.
- Deacon Barb Limbach – 12/7/23.
- Pastor Don Gray – 1/1/2024.

SC 2023/31: The Council unanimously approved the recommendation of Bishop Bill to approve the retirements as presented.

Bishop Bill reported and recommended the Synod Council call Pastor Matt Masko to Interim Ministry at Servants of Christ, Indianapolis and Messiah, Brownsburg IN.

SC 2023/32: The Council unanimously approved the recommendation of the Bishop with respect to the call of Pastor Matt Masko.

Bishop Bill recommended Candidate Amy Bartleson Balcam be called to a First Call to a non-congregation based ministry, pending Conference of Bishops approval.

SC 2023/33: The Council unanimously approved the recommendation of the Bishop with respect to the Call of Amy Bartleson Balcam.

Bishop Bill recommended to the Council to approve On Leave from Call status to Pastor Will Bevins beginning 9/6/2023.

SC 2023/34: The Council unanimously approved the recommendation of the Bishop with respect to the leave status of Pastor Will Bevins.

Information from Synod Staff

Members of the Synod Staff reported on the various areas of their ministry missions per their previously submitted written reports. See Reports in Dropbox.

Committees and Task Forces Reports

Constitution Committee – Josh Tatum reported the committee would be meeting in October as it was completing reviews of congregation constitutions. The committee also reviews the constitutions prior to going through the formal process of amending the constitution. With respect to the Synod Constitution, the committee should consider amending it to allow full-communion pastors serving the Synod to be eligible to vote at the Assembly. Members of the committee are Mike Anderson, chair, Pastor Eric Allen, Patricia McIntyre, David Reese, and Josh Tatum.

Racial Justice Task Force Tim Graham reported the committee is working on various ways to promote communications of racial justice work to the synod congregations.

Immigration Justice Task Force – No report

Women of the ELCA – Tina Smith provided information on the conferences coming up in the next few months.

Other Business

The Constitution Committee needed another member. Bishop Bill recommend Rev. Jane Rothman.

SC 2023/35: The Council unanimously approved the recommendation.

The Finance Committee needed another member. Bishop Bill recommended Harry Albers to be appointed to the committee.

SC 2023/36: The Council unanimously approved the recommendation.

Bishop Bill also asked for prayers for the election of Bishops in the Sierra Pacific and the Central Southern Illinois synods which were occurring at the time of the Council meeting.

Bishop Bill reported on the Future Meetings of the Council, which are as follows:

- November 3-4, 2023: Benedict Inn, Beech Grove, IN
- January 20, 2024: via Zoom
- April 12-13, 2024: INKY Lutheran Center
- June 7, 2024: Crown Plaza Louisville Airport, Louisville, KY
- Synod Assembly: June 7-9, Crown Plaza Louisville Airport, Louisville, KY
- October 12, 2024: Installation of the 4th Bishop of the Indiana-Kentucky Sy

Preparation for future meeting in November:

- Chaplains: Ryan Bailey and Betsy Kirk
- Mission Monitor: Ladona Webb
- Other Concerns

Respectfully Submitted,

Julie Slavens
Synod Secretary